

**Department of Telecommunications and Energy  
Record Requests**

**THE BERKSHIRE GAS COMPANY  
DTE 04-116**

**Witness:** Richard E. Nasman  
**Date:** September 27, 2005

**Question**

**DTE RR-6:** Please provide a copy of your company's repair, inspection and maintenance procedures or guidelines.

**Response:** The Berkshire Gas Company ("Berkshire" or "the Company") maintains several documents that relate to the repair, inspection and maintenance of Berkshire's natural gas facilities and assets. The primary document utilized by the Company is its Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Manual (see Attachment DTE RR-6(a)). A copy of this document is also on file with the Department's Pipeline Engineering and Safety Division as required by regulation. This Manual is prepared in accordance with, and references the operation and maintenance requirements of 49 CFR 192.00 – Transportation of Natural Gas and other Gas by Pipeline: Minimum Federal Safety Standards and 220 CMR 100.00 – Massachusetts Distribution Code. The O&M Manual comprehensively describes requirements for the inspection, repair and maintenance of facilities. For example, on page 41, Section 5.1.4 – Gate Stations, this section highlights the weekly, semi-annual, and annual inspections and tests for various components of the gate station. This is a similar scenario for leak surveys, regulator stations, compressor stations, LPG facilities, gas mains and services.

The Company has also maintained a Construction Standards and Methods manual (see Attachment DTE RR-6(b)). This manual contains installation requirements, standard techniques, testing procedures and materials utilized by both the Company and its contractors.

The Company also maintains a Safety Manual (see Attachment DTE RR-6(c)). This document presents many of the safety-related requirements and precautions Berkshire has implemented either due to regulatory requirements or in furtherance of good business practices and demonstrates the Company's strong and continuing commitment to safety in its performing repair, inspection and maintenance activities.

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**DTE RR-7:** Please describe your company's training requirements for both employees and contractors.

**Response:** The Company conducts operational, safety and Operator Qualification ("OQ") training. Operational training includes informal sessions conducted by Supervisors and vendors and a range of on the job training activities. Subjects covered include technical subjects as well as operating policies and procedures. Training records are maintained in a central location showing participants, instructors and course material. Additionally the Company's supervisors conduct periodic field inspections to assure Company programs/policies/procedures are being followed. Additional training may be performed when appropriate. In regard to safety training, a matrix has been developed presenting topics and employees who are required to receive training. Training records are maintained that document courses completed and verify all required material was covered. Field inspections are also performed on a regular basis to assure compliance with safety rules. Berkshire utilizes the OQ plan, developed with the Northeast Gas Association (NGA), to determine which tasks each employee is required to satisfy. Employees are trained and tested pursuant to Federal guidelines set up for this program to ensure they are qualified to perform certain tasks (e.g. leak detection).

Regarding contractors, the Company utilizes one contractor for construction purposes, one contractor for welding services, and one contractor for leak surveys. Any contractor utilized by Berkshire is required to maintain their own Operation and Safety programs. The Company reviews contractor programs to ensure that they are appropriate and properly implemented. Berkshire also conducts training with contractors annually covering specific policies, procedures, construction practices and new material/equipment being used. Field inspections of the construction contractor are performed to determine that training is adequately meeting the Company's requirements. Construction contractors are required to execute a contract that specifically states qualification requirements which also includes training. Contractors are required to attend "OQ" training and testing for all covered tasks they perform. This is done either in conjunction with Berkshire's training or done independently (e.g. NGA). If done independently, contractors must provide documentation showing qualifications before they are allowed to perform certain tasks for the Company.

As part of Berkshire's ongoing review and assessment of operations and business needs, training is continually reviewed/modified/added so as to provide a complete and comprehensive program for employees and contractors.

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**DTE RR-8:** Please provide an analysis of how the Department should consider specific training requirements in the context of service quality guidelines.

**Response:** The Company does not believe that the Department needs to or should develop a prescribed training requirement for Companies as part of service quality guidelines. Under existing regulations there are already strong incentives for the Company to provide the necessary training. There are also established penalties for any failure to conform to established requirements. In the natural gas industry, training/qualifications are a regulatory requirement to certify and demonstrate operational personnel meet minimum ability and qualifications. An example of this is that of "Operator Qualifications" ("OQ") as required by 49 CFR 192, Subpart N – Qualification of Pipeline Personnel. This regulation requires personnel to possess/demonstrate minimum qualifications to perform various job functions (e.g. leak investigation). In sum, the Department has a meaningful process in place to ensure compliance with training requirements and there has been no demonstration that adding this requirement to the SQ Guidelines is justified.

In any event, as the Company has continued to maintain in this proceeding, the Service Quality component of a PBR plan should not be materially and unilaterally altered during the term of an established plan. See, e.g., Initial Comments of Berkshire Gas, March 1, 2005; Reply Comments of Berkshire Gas, April 5, 2005; Berkshire Gas Response to Information Request DTE-A-1; Berkshire Gas Response to Information Request DTE-A-3-2.

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**DTE RR-12:** Please describe any independent audits for leak surveys of the Company, including any by regulatory agencies.

**Response:** The Department, through its Pipeline Engineering and Safety Division does conduct frequent and independent inspections (up to weekly) of Company crews and operations to review adherence to state and federal regulatory criteria. Should a company not be performing in conformance with these standards the Department has the ability to issue warnings, citations and financial penalties for failure to meet the relevant code requirement. Therefore, there already exists an independent regulatory process/system/tool in place that monitors Company operations.